


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

January 18, 2002

Hot Topics



Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE).

Preliminary data indicates that TDH had a 51% return rate on its survey this year, far better than the 34% last time around. We will not have a final count until the end of this week. We will receive the final survey results in 4-6 weeks. Once we have the final results, a plan will be created to address employee concerns. For more information, contact Sharon Brewer, Administrative Systems Project, at (512) 458-7546 or e-mail. *For more information, contact Sharon Brewer, Administrative Systems Project, at (512) 458-7546 or e-mail sharon.brewer@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) Birth Indexes.

On November 22, 2001, the Bureau of Vital Statistics permanently removed the birth and death indexes from the internet. A number of concerns were received on how the birth indexes could possibly be utilized to assist in narrowing the identification of an adoption that would violate the state statute. The following message was posted: "Due to the possibility of the indexes being used to fraudulently obtain another's identity or to reveal the identities of those involved in an adoption, the birth and death indexes have been permanently removed." To ensure compliance with the existing statute, the indexes will be available via microfiche only. *For more information, contact Debra F. Owens, Chief and State Registrar, Bureau of Vital Statistics, at (512) 458-7366 or e-mail debra.owens@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Food and Drug Safety Bioterrorism Work Group.

A work group to address food and drug bio-security issues has been established by the Bureau of Food and Drug Safety. Dan Sowards, director of the Manufactured Foods Division, will serve as Chief of Food and Drug Bio-Security for a three-month period. He selected his team from the staff of the seven Bureau divisions and Automation.

The work group is developing a Bureau plan to minimize the threat from bioterrorism with respect to our food and drug supply in Texas. Each division is also developing a response geared toward constituents in the areas of manufactured foods, seafood, retail food service, milk and dairy, meat slaughtering and processing, and drugs and biologics. The initial plan is to develop advice for field staff and advice for industry to minimize the threat. This will be followed with a plan to deal with an actual threat or event.

Soward is also working with the TDH Bioterrorism Work Group to update the TDH portion of the State Emergency Management Plan and to supply the TDH Work Group with additional information they may need with respect to food and drug bio-security. *For more information contact Dan Sowards, Manufactured Foods Division, (512) 719-0243 or e-mail dan.sowards@tdh.state.tx.us.*

New Programs



Obesity Initiative: My Body Suits Me.

The Texas Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is developing an obesity initiative called "My Body Suits Me." The primary focus of this educational campaign is to increase awareness of the health issues of obesity, especially to parents of young children. Changing the family environment to encourage physical activity, to decrease television viewing, and to decrease consumption of calorie-rich beverages are the primary objectives of this campaign. The statewide WIC campaign will feature TDH produced videos and educational curricula along with take-home information for WIC participants. This initiative, currently in the development stage, will be implemented in the Fall of 2002. *For more information, contact Ms. Barbara Keir, Director, Public Health Nutrition and Education Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2144 or e-mail barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks



Salmonella Investigation.

Region 1 epidemiologists and sanitarians investigated an outbreak of salmonella poisoning at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) near Childress. Over 500 of the 1,300 inmates became ill in early November, making it the largest institutional disease outbreak in the state's history. Despite a lack of concrete evidence, as well as conflicting accounts about the outbreak from the prisoners and the prison staff, investigators were able to determine, after testing and several follow-up interviews, which inmate and which food items (either a barbecue chicken meal or a side dish of pico de gallo) were the most likely sources of the salmonella outbreak. Region 1 epidemiologists are preparing a written report and a set of recommendations to present to the TDCJ. *For more information, contact Barry Wilson, Regional Epidemiologist, (806) 767-0496, or e-mail barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



E. Coli.

TDH regional and central offices were notified of 6 culture-confirmed cases of *E. coli* O157 infections in the same West Texas city with onsets within about 3 days of each other. All developed over the Thanksgiving weekend. To date, there are 21 ill persons who are either culture-positive or, because of symptomatology and onset dates, considered to be ill from the same kind of infection. No single common source of the infections has yet been identified. The source is considered likely to be some kind of produce that was distributed to a number of restaurants. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Shigellosis.

An outbreak of shigellosis was reported in North Texas in early December. There are thought to be about 40 people ill. The infections started in a daycare center, spread to other daycare centers, and then to an elementary and finally a middle school. Regional staff members have issued a press release and made information available about the control of *shigella* transmission. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Syphilis Outbreak.

Staff members from Region 1's STD/HIV program have provided extensive assistance to health workers with the City of Amarillo Health Department in the wake of a syphilis outbreak in Potter County and north Amarillo in November and December of 2001. Region 1 staff have assisted with interviews, case management, data entry and analysis, medication facilitation, and targeted outreach, among other duties. With the help of TDH staff, the at-risk population in the outbreak has been identified. *For more information, contact David Hoehns, Regional STD/HIV Director, at (806) 767-0494 or e-mail david.hoehns@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Meningococcal Disease Preparations.

On December 12, regional epidemiologist facilitated a conference call with regional staff, epidemiologists from Local Health Departments, hospital infection control staff, TDH staff from the Infectious Disease and Surveillance Epidemiology Program, and TDH staff from the Office of Communication, to coordinate the public health response to recent cases of meningococcal disease in the region. From October 1st to December 12th, there have been 7 confirmed cases of meningococcal disease in the region. The group worked on a health advisory to go out to hospitals and physicians in Hardin and Liberty counties, discussed case reporting protocols, and discussed a strategy to involve the news media to educate the general public regarding the disease. *For more information, contact Huai Lin, Regional Epidemiologist, at (713) 767-3232 or e-mail huai.lin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pertussis Death in Collin County.

Another pertussis related-death has been reported in Texas bringing the total to 5 this year. The infant was 1 month old at onset of paroxysmal coughing on November 11 was hospitalized November 26 and died December 5. *Bordetella pertussis* was isolated from a nasopharyngeal swab. Although the infant had a paroxysmal cough, he did not have an inspiratory whoop, post-tussive vomiting, or cyanosis after paroxysm. An adult in the household had been coughing for approximately 12 days before the infant became symptomatic. *For more Information, contact Laura Tabony or David Bastis, Immunization Division, Surveillance and Epidemiology Program, at (512) 458-7284, or e-mail laura.tabony@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Key Reports



HHSAS/PeopleSoft.

The HHSAS Financial System has been up and running for 4 months. During the months from September 1, to October 31, the HHSAS system has processed more than 77,500 vouchers, has paid a total amount exceeding \$1,255,145,000, and has successfully processed and paid over 93% of voucher transactions. As with any large-scale implementation of a new system many issues are being addressed including the conversion of massive amounts of data from the legacy system to HHSAS. Due to the fact that transactions are being processed differently, this is resulting in some unacceptable conditions that must be worked out after the system is in production. These conditions are minimal, which is evident by the successful processing and payment of over 93% of all transactions sent to the HHSAS system. The current processing issues are related more to the natural learning curve rather than system inadequacies.

Phase 2 of the HHSAS/Human Resource Management System (HRMS) will involve the Human Resource area. The modules scheduled to go into production will be, Time and Leave, Payroll, and Human Resources. This module has several component; including, Personnel Management, Base Benefits, and Position Control. The start date for Phase 2

is scheduled for December 31, 2002. For more information, contact Sharon Brewer, Administrative Systems Project, at (512) 458-7456 or e-mail sharon.brewer@tdh.state.tx.us.



1999 Cancer Mortality in Texas Report.

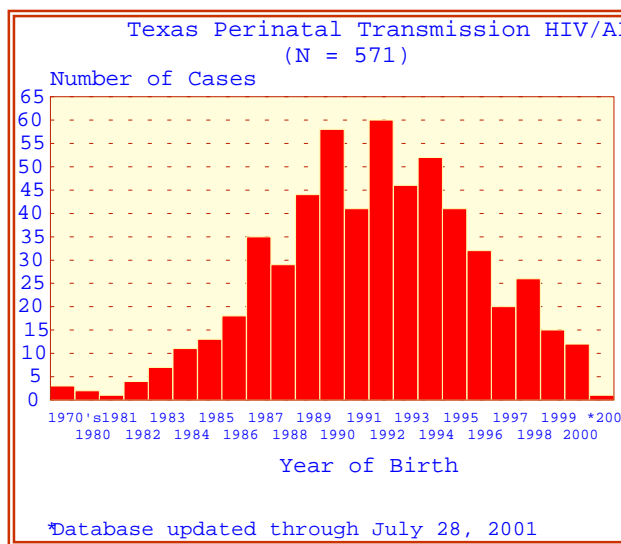
The 1999 Cancer Mortality in Texas report has been printed and is ready for distribution. A total of 32,703 Texans died from cancer in 1999, and cancer of the lung and bronchus was the leading cancer cause in both men and women, accounting for 9,174 (28%) of all cancer deaths. For more information, contact Melanie Williams, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail melanie.williams@tdh.state.tx.us.



Perinatal Transmission of HIV.

Due to new procedures along with highly active combination anti-HIV therapy, the number of children born with HIV infection in Texas is trending downward, as this graph of Perinatal Transmission HIV/AIDS cases reported through the HIV/AIDS surveillance

system clearly shows. Although there may be some delay in reporting cases for the most recent birth years, historic reporting delay statistics indicate that late reports are unlikely to swell the numbers enough to reverse the finding of a decided downward trend in such cases.



In the early years of the HIV epidemic, most Texas AIDS cases appeared among men. Within a few years, however, HIV infection had become a significant problem among Texas women. Due to perinatal transmission of the virus, HIV became a significant problem among their children as well.

In 1994, two prevention breakthroughs

occurred which would eventually diminish the burden of perinatal HIV in the state: (1) a regimen of AZT administered to the pregnant mother and newborn would greatly reduce the likelihood that their babies would be born infected with HIV, and (2) Texas, by law, mandated that all pregnant women be offered voluntary HIV testing and educated to the benefits to their unborn children of taking AZT if they themselves were infected. For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, Director, HIV/STD Epidemiology Division at (512) 490-2545 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.



School Based Nutrition Monitoring Survey (SBNM).

As part of a collaborative effort to implement the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program in the Bryan Independent School District, the SBNM survey was administered during the month of October. The SBNM survey is a surveillance system developed to monitor trends in body mass index and to elicit information about the factors that underlie obesity such as dietary and physical activity behaviors. One thousand 4th grade students were surveyed. Preliminary results show approximately twenty-six percent of the 4th grade class is overweight and/or obese (>95th percentile for Body Mass Index). The latest national data revealed 13% of children aged 6-11 years are overweight (1999). Qualitative results are pending. The Regional Nutritionist will continue to work with Bryan ISD representatives to address the nutrition and physical activity needs of the

children. For more information, contact Joan M. Atkinson, Nutrition Program at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2302 or e-mail joan.Atkinson@tdh.state.tx.us.

TDH Program Updates



Texas EMS Conference.

The 16th annual Texas EMS Conference was held in Austin from November 17-21. There were more than 3000 total participants and 230 vendor booths, including 5 helicopters, 38 ambulances, fire trucks, and even a rock-climbing wall. It is estimated that ~30,000 hours of EMS continuing education were awarded. The highlight of the event was the EMS Awards Luncheon. There was a moving ceremony to honor EMS personnel lost during the last year as well as to commemorate the September 11 tragedy. Awards were presented to EMS firms and individuals from around the state in recognition of their excellent service. Many constituency organizations (i.e. EMS Association of Texas, Texas Ambulance Association, Texas College of Emergency Physicians, Texas Trauma Coordinators Forum, Texas Association of Regional Advisory Councils, etc.) held meetings during this timeframe. Additionally, the quarterly Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) meetings were held in conjunction with the conference. This included 7 Standing Committee and 2 Task Force meetings. Constituents provided input at these meetings on where they think EMS and Trauma Systems should be in the year 2010. For more information, contact Kelly Harrell, Team Leader for EMS Information and Injury Prevention, at (512) 834-6700 or e-mail kelly.harrell@tdh.state.tx.us.



Update on CDC Grant Activities for Public Health Nutrition and Education (PHNE).

The Public Health and Nutrition Education Division in the Bureau of Nutrition Services received a 3-year, \$300,000 per year grant for the period October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2003. Part of the funding has been used to employ a grant coordinator, and we also anticipate hiring a physical activity program specialist. These positions will help to build the infrastructure in the TDH to promote nutrition and physical activity initiatives across programs; conduct strategic planning activities with TDH programs and external partners to develop a state plan to prevent and control obesity and other related chronic diseases through nutrition and physical activity intervention; and conduct epidemiology and market research to determine a priority population for intervention. PHNE has contracted with the University of Texas at Austin to help conduct social marketing research and with the University of Texas at Houston to provide additional epidemiology data from their school-based nutrition monitoring system. For more information, contact Barbara Keir, Director, Public Health Nutrition and Education Division, at 512-458-7111, ext. 2144 or e-mail at barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.



Put Prevention Into Practice (PPIP).

The Federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recently released their implementation guide "A Step-by-Step guide to Delivering Clinical Preventive Services: A Systems Approach" as part of the national PPIP materials. The guide is based on TDH PPIP implementation guide, and TDH is recognized for its contribution. For more information, contact Anne Williamson, Adult Health Program, (512) 458-7534 or e-mail anne.williamson@tdh.state.tx.us.



Tobacco.

A Quit and Win contest that encouraged Houston, Beaumont/Port Arthur and other East Texas residents to sign up to quit tobacco for thirty days was held in November as part of the Great American Smoke Out. Approximately 700 entries were received. The winner

will receive a \$1000 dollar prize and will be announced next month after a random drawing of verified successful participants. *For more information, contact Diana Condon, Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control at (512) 458-7402 or e-mail diana.condon@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Diabetes Council.

Texas Medicine featured Diabetes as the cover story in its November issue. The Texas Diabetes Council Standards of Care Algorithms were highlighted as part of the story.

A new educational video Diabetes in Texas was released in November. The video targets primary care physicians, nurses, nutritionists/dietitians and diabetes educators. The video covers:

- Epidemiological trends related to Type 2 diabetes,
- Pathogenesis of Type 2 diabetes,
- Principal research findings regarding the disease,
- Clinical standards for diagnosing Type 2 diabetes,
- The recommended approach for managing Type 2 diabetes, and
- Guidelines for the use oral agents and insulin in treating the disease.

The video is accredited for one hour of AMA/PRA Category credit. The material will soon be available by video streaming over the Internet. *For more information, contact Jan Ozias, Texas Diabetes Program/ Council at (512) 458-7490 or e-mail jan.ozias@tdh.sate.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C.

The hepatitis C staff worked closely with the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors to write the text for a training guide to assist state health departments integrate viral hepatitis activities with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) programs. The project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Staff also wrote content for a web page describing the state's hepatitis C initiative for the Immunization Action Coalition.

To date, the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) counseling and testing sites across the state have counseled more than 24,000 clients. A total of 15,700 were screened for HCV, and 4,750 (about 30 percent) were found to have antibodies to the hepatitis C virus. Due to the improved sensitivity and specificity of the enzyme-linked immunoassay, the TDH testing algorithm reduced the number of expensive supplemental tests (Recombinant Blot Assays) needed from 4,750 to 128. The estimated cost savings is about \$550,000.

RNA has been extracted from about 300 samples collected across the state. To date, about 20 of these samples have been genotyped and most are Type 1, the most common form of hepatitis C. As there are treatment implications for different genotypes, once complete, these data should help with long range planning. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.Heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us*



Award to Dr. Jane Mahlow.

Dr. Jane Mahlow, Director of the Zoonosis Control Division, received the W. R. Bilderback DVM Award from the Texas Animal Control Association in November 2001. The award is in recognition of her outstanding support and service to the animal control profession. *For more information, contact Dr. Jane Mahlow, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail jane.mahlow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Award to Pamela Wilson.

The Texas Veterinary Medical Association named Pamela Wilson of the Zoonosis Control Division Veterinary Technician of the Year for 2002. The award, which will be presented in February 2002, is in recognition of her work in the veterinary profession via clinical and public health perspectives. *For more information, contact Pamela Wilson, Zoonosis Control Division, (512) 458-7255 or e-mail pam.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Award to Dr. James Wright.

Dr. James Wright, Zoonosis Control Division, Region 6/5 South, Tyler, received the Texas Department of Health's Act of Kindness Award in October 2001 for assisting a co-worker with a terminally ill pet. *For more information, contact Dr. James Wright, Zoonosis Control Division, Region 6/5 South, Tyler, (903) 533-5212 or e-mail james.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies in the Americas Meeting in Canada.

There were two oral presentations authored and given by members of the Zoonosis Control Division, November 12-16, at the 12th Annual International Rabies in the Americas Meeting in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Ernest Oertli, Rodney Rohde, Guy Moore, and Bradley Hicks presented a "Retrospective Review of Skunk Variant Rabies in Texas." Rodney Rohde also presented "Molecular Evidence for Sustained Transmission of a Bat Variant of Rabies Virus in Skunks in Arizona." *For more information, contact Rodney Rohde, Zoonosis Control Division at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail rodney.rohde@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Program Managers' Meeting.

On December 4-6, the TB Elimination Division hosted a meeting in Austin for TB program managers and supervisory staff from local and regional health departments. Items relevant to TB control and prevention activities were discussed. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Title V Meeting.

On December 18, staff from the TB Elimination Division met in Austin with TDH staff who administer Title V funds to discuss TB screening in pregnancy. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



INS Meeting.

On December 18, staff from the TB Elimination Division met with the Immigration and Naturalization Service staff in Austin to discuss TB control and prevention activities relevant to INS detainees and employees. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Panhandle Poison Center.

The Panhandle Poison Center in Amarillo has achieved certification by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC). This achievement means that all six centers of the Texas Poison Center Network (TPCN) are fully certified as mandated in the creating legislation. The TPCN will be undertaking a public awareness campaign as the national toll free number for poison control is planned for implementation in January 2002. More details will be forthcoming as the campaign gets underway, but will include new educational materials and a new logo. *For more information, contact Judy Whitfield at (512) 458-7268 or e-mail judy.whitfield@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Injuries.

Efforts by the Injury Epidemiology and Surveillance Program to reduce injuries in Texas were highlighted in the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's new Injury Fact Book 2001-2002. The fact book provides a comprehensive look at the injury problem in America and efforts underway to reduce it. Collaborative efforts with CDC that were highlighted included: a) evaluating the effectiveness of education and marketing in increasing bicycle helmet use in an isolated community, and b) characterizing the types of injuries associated with boat propellers in the state. *For more information, contact David Zane at (512) 458-7266 or e-mail david.zane@tdh.state.tx.us.*



State and Territorial Injury Prevention directors Association (STIPDA).

Director of the Injury Epidemiology and Surveillance Program was recently elected Vice President of STIPDA. STIPDA is a national organization of professionals engaged in injury prevention and control, research, and the development and evaluation of interventions and policy. *For more information, contact David Zane at (512) 458-7266 or e-mail david.zane@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Meeting.

Representatives from the Cancer Registry and the Environmental Epidemiology & Toxicology Division met with Region 6 EPA staff in Dallas to discuss the appropriate use of TDH cancer registry and environmental epidemiology data. TDH staff also provided an overview of the recent TDH Citizens for Environmental Justice/Corpus Christi/Nueces County investigations. *For more information, contact Melanie Williams, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail melanie.williams@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cancer Data Work Group.

The Medical Director of the Methodist Hospital of Dallas Cancer Center has agreed to chair the Cancer Data Work Group (CDWG), a group of stakeholders interested in improving cancer registration in Texas. He is a board certified medical oncologist with an extensive background in cancer care, quality assurance and utilization, and other cancer-related areas. The American Cancer Society, Texas Division, has agreed to host the CDWG this year. A meeting is planned for late January. *For more information contact Nancy Weiss, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail nancy.weiss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis A Vaccine Recall.

Merck & Co. has issued a recall for hepatitis A vaccine, which was provided in prefilled syringes. According to the lot numbers involved in the recall, TDH may have received 270,000 doses, with the majority having already been administered. The recall involves both pediatric/adolescent and adult vaccines. Only vaccine in prefilled syringes are affected.

At this time, we are asking all Texas Vaccines for Children providers to review their inventories and if they have any of the hepatitis A vaccine lot numbers listed in the recall, to set those syringes aside and NOT USE THEM.

A determination will be made shortly on whether to recall and revaccinate anyone who received the Merck vaccine (recall goes back to some vaccine we received in 1999) or to do random serologic testing for immunity to hepatitis A. *For more information, contact Judi Chase, Immunization Division, Vaccine Management Section, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6266, or e-mail judi.chase@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Registry Update.

Staff are analyzing registry data to determine the number of doses recorded in the registry for the hepatitis A vaccine lots that have been voluntarily recalled by the manufacturer. These data will be used to compare with division vaccine accounting information and pharmacy inventory data to test the registry's role in responding to vaccine recall notification efforts. *For more information, please contact Pat Feagin, Immunization Division, at 512-458-7284, extension 6323, or e-mail pat.feagin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



“The Boots Are Back Campaign” Immunization RFP.

Three recipients were selected to receive funding for the development or continuation of immunization coalitions. The focus of the RFP is to: 1) increase parental, community, and provider awareness, involvement and support of the need for childhood immunizations; 2) increase parental and provider awareness, involvement, and enrollment into the statewide immunization registry, ImmTrac; 3) decrease barriers that prevent children two years old and younger from being appropriately immunized; and 4) complement existing programs by building partnerships with groups in the community, which advocate and actively seek the timely and appropriate immunization of children. The recipients are the Greater Council of Greater Dallas, Dallas, Texas; The Refuge Corporation, Copperas Cove, Texas; and St. Joseph's Regional Health Center, Bryan, Texas. *For more information, contact Vivian Harris, Outreach Coordinator, Communication and Training Program, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6420 or e-mail vivian.harris@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Critically Abnormal Lab Screen Results.

The Newborn Screening Laboratory reported the following critically abnormal laboratory screen results to the Newborn Screening follow-up team of nurses: 29 elevated phenylalanine results indicating possible Phenylketonuria, 71 elevated galactose results indicating possible Galactosemia, 37 abnormal T4/TSH results indicating possible Hypothyroidism, 23 clinically significant Hemoglobinopathies, and 6 elevated 17-OHP results indicating possible Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. *For more information, contact Eldridge T. Hutcheson, Director, Biochemistry and Genetics Division at (512) 458-7430 or e-mail eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us*



Lead Screening: Abnormal Lab Test Results.

The Clinical Chemistry Laboratory reported the following abnormal laboratory test results to Texas Health Steps and Title V medical providers: 500 children's specimens had blood lead levels greater than or equal to 10 µg/dL indicating possible lead poisoning, and nine children had more blood lead than the medically critical value of 40 µg/dL; 751 children's specimens had total hemoglobin levels of less than 11 g/dL indicating possible anemia, and one child had less total hemoglobin than the medically critical value of 7 g/dL; eight children had clinically significant hemoglobinopathies. In addition, 56 children had serum cholesterol levels greater than or equal to 200 mg/dL indicating possible hyperlipidemia, and two patients' specimens were confirmed positive for syphilis. *For more information, contact Dwight Schaeper, Director, Environmental Sciences Division at (512) 485-7318 or e-mail dwight.schaeper@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 1



Laser Use Investigated.

Region 1 Radiation Control staff are investigating a hair removal facility for improper use of lasers. After receiving a number of complaints from customers who had received burns while undergoing the hair removal treatment, investigators determined that the facility had been completely without medical supervision for several months. The investigation is ongoing, and an enforcement conference is scheduled for February in Austin. *For more information, contact Tim Gibson, Environmental Specialist, at (806) 655-7151, or e-mail tim.gibson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 2 & 3



Rabies.

Zoonosis Control in region 2/3 has 458 cases of rabies infected animals in our Region. Last year (2000) there were 381 rabies infected animals disclosed on our Region. These cases have been in skunks except for one rabies infected cat in Cooke County and one rabies infected cow in Grayson County. This has been a busy year with rabies cases. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Program Manager, Acting Regional Epidemiologist, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Easter Equine Encephalomyelitis.

Zoonosis Control PHR 2/3 investigated a case of Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis in a horse in Montague County. Mosquitoes in Montague County infected the horse. There was no history of the horse leaving its premise. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Program Manager, Acting Regional Epidemiologist, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pet Overpopulation Survey.

Zoonosis Control PHR 2/3 has initiated the Pet Overpopulation surveys for shelters in the Region. There have been three media contacts. One was in Dallas for information on West Nile Virus and the other two concerned a Shigellosis outbreak in Wilbarger County. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley, Zoonosis Control Program Manager, Acting Regional Epidemiologist, at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 & 5



Regional Local Health Department Bioterrorism Preparedness Meeting.

On November 30th, a meeting/conference call was held with regional staff and Local Health Departments to get feedback on bioterrorism preparedness and concerns. Representatives from City of Houston, Harris County, Galveston County, City of Port Arthur, Montgomery County, and Jefferson County participated in the meeting. After a

brief overview of regional and Bioterrorism Workgroup activities, The Regional Director facilitated a discussion of their concerns. As a result of this meeting, local health departments will share their best practices and lessons learned with the regional office so these ideas might be disseminated and shared with other public health partners throughout the region. *For more information, contact Brian Rutherford, Regional Customer Service Representative, at (713) 767-3010 or e-mail brian.rutherford@tdh.state.tx.us.*



8 County Bioterrorism Preparedness Meeting.

On December 7th in Kountze in Hardin County, regional director attended a meeting of eight county officials convened by Jefferson County Judge. County Judges, EMS, and emergency response officials came from eight counties. Jefferson, Orange, Hardin, Liberty, Chambers (PHR 6/5 South) and Newton, Tyler, and Jasper (PHR 4/5 North). The purpose of the meeting was to organize as eight counties ("regional concept") to identify weakness and critical areas for bioterrorism and other types of disaster responses. Several committees were formed. Jefferson County Health Department Director will head a committee to address health and local health department services and needs. Region 6/5s director agreed to provide assistance through the temporary regional bioterrorism coordinator who could provide best practices from other local health departments and TDH responses to questions. The groups anticipated needed TDH assistance in establishing inter-local agreements to share resources, etc. *For more information, contact Brian Rutherford, Regional Customer Service Representative, at (713) 767-3010 or e-mail brian.rutherford@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



New Resident.

A new Resident in Preventive Medicine and Public Health started her Practicum in Region 8 December 3rd. She is a diplomate of the American Board of Family Practice and brings an active interest in border health, health disparities, and disease control. *For more information, contact W.S. "Chip" Riggins, Regional Director, Preventive Medicine Residency Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Steering Committee.

Region 8 staff participated in the Regional Emergency Medical Preparedness Steering Committee's walk-through of the City of San Antonio's Bioterrorism Response Plan. Staff have been active participants of this regional planning effort and briefed the TDH Bioterrorism workgroup on our local plans in December. *For more information, contact W.S. "Chip" Riggins, Regional Director, Preventive Medicine Residency Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Binational, Texas/Coahuila Border Public Health Alliance Summit.

Region 8 and the Office of Border Health hosted a Binational, Texas/Coahuila Border Public Health Alliance Summit in San Antonio December 17th. Officials from Sister cities, Piedras Negras/Eagle Pass, Ciudad Acuna/Del Rio were in attendance and support from respective state capitols in Saltillo and Austin was wonderful. Recent binational accomplishments and future projects were laid out and a plan agreed to. *For more information, contact W.S. "Chip" Riggins, Regional Director, Preventive Medicine Residency Director, at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Brazos Valley Assessment Project.

The Madison/Leon county public health nurse attended the Brazos Valley Assessment Project Planning meeting in Bryan on December 12 to discuss the planned community assessment project for the Brazos Valley area being coordinated by the Texas A & M School of Rural Public Health. The community assessment design is based on the Population/Community Based Health Status Improvement Model. Participation in this project will allow the opportunity to help shape the survey, identify health problems and trends, identify new resources, and maximize community capacity to address health issues. A timeline for this project has been established and future partnership meetings scheduled. For more information, contact Pat Collins, at (254) 778-6744, ext 2105 or e-mail pat.collins@tdh.state.tx.us.



Administrative Animal Control Officer (ACO) Training Course.

On December 11-12, the Zoonosis Control Program hosted an Administrative Animal Control Officer (ACO) Training Course in Temple. Students from animal control agencies in Killeen (Bell Co.), Georgetown and Cedar Park (Williamson County), and Bastrop County attended. This marks the first Administrative ACO Training Course ever held in PHR 7. The course was taught with the assistance of Zoonosis Control and animal control personnel from PHR 3. It focused on management and leadership principles based on the texts “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” and “The One-Minute Manager.” For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450 or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.



Inhumane Euthanasia Methods E-mails.

During December e-mail messages from around the United States complained of inhumane euthanasia methods at an animal shelter in Coryell County. The shelter does not have to comply with Chapter 823 (Animal Shelter Act) of the Texas Health and Safety Code, because the county population is too low. TDH has no formal jurisdiction over the shelter. Despite this lack of formal regulatory oversight, Zoonosis Control staff relayed the nature of the complaints to the shelter’s management, provided written information on sheltering and humane euthanasia standards, made a site visit to observe the carbon monoxide chamber used in the euthanasia process, and offered suggestions for improvement. Zoonosis Control staff also linked the Humane Society of the United States with shelter staff as another way to support the shelter and promote the humane treatment of animals. For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450 or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.



Strategic Planning Committee.

As a result of the legislative mandate, Government code, Chapter 531, PHR 7 established a Strategic Planning Committee on May 30. The regional director selected staff who have the authority to make decisions and who have public health experience in specialty areas that could provide a broad knowledge base for the project.

The committee has completed the first two stages of the project. During stage 1, the committee reviewed the components of the National Performance Standards (NPS) tool, selected a county to survey, and interviewed stakeholders within the county to determine perceptions regarding the Local Public Health System. In stage 2, the committee reviewed the agency’s responses to the questions of the NPS tool, identified and prioritized common

issues from the stakeholders and the agency perspectives, and completed the strategic planning template for FY 2002.

The committee selected Caldwell County based on the following issues: health status indicators, recent community assessment, hospital presence, cooperative relationship with county officials, and active public health clinic presence.

Between the stakeholders and agency responses the team identified 26 issues under the 10 Essential Public Health Functions. The committee reached consensus about which issues to address within each year of the strategic plan. The team also gathered anecdotal information from the stakeholders beyond the scope of the NPS tool.

PHR 7 plans to use the project established in Caldwell County as a template for the remaining 22 counties located in PHR 7. *For more information, contact Maribeth Bartz, at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail maribeth.bartz@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 11



Preliminary data shows 21 confirmed active TB cases for Starr County.

Laboratory confirmation is pending on 8 additional active TB suspects. The case rate for the county would be at least could go as high as 53 per 100,000. In 2000 only 7 cases were reported in Starr County. Risk factors include recent immigration, age, diabetes, and substance abuse or distribution.

Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Webb County had a total of 198 new cases compared to 190 cases in 2000. These other border counties showed stable rates or modest declines.

PHR 11 and Laredo Health Department also held a special surveillance activity for the 5000 residents of El Cenizo, a colonia suburb of Laredo, from December 12-14 because of recurrent cases coming from that colonia. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director, at (956) 423-0130, or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*